

Support the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act

The Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act introduced by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA), along with Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), and Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students attending schools that participate in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the 2020–2021 school year. In the midst of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many more children and families across the country face economic hardship and are thus eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. However, because of the financial and administrative burdens placed on school nutrition programs during the pandemic, certifying all of these children to receive meals places an even heavier weight on these already vulnerable programs. Below is a top line summary of the provisions within this Act.

What Does the Act Propose?

- All students would be eligible to receive free school meals through NSLP and SBP for the 2020–2021 school year.
- Schools, local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations would no longer have to meet the area eligibility requirements for the Summer Food Service Program, the Seamless Summer Option available through NSLP, the Child and Adult Care Food Program’s (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meal and Snack Program, and the NSLP Snack Program. The area eligibility requirements limit summer and afterschool sites to serving areas where at least half of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

- All CACFP child care homes would be eligible for the Tier 1 reimbursement rate (the highest reimbursement rate).

What Does the Act Propose?

- All children would have access to the nutritious school meals they need to learn and be healthy. Even prior to COVID-19, the eligibility requirements for free school meals left out many children whose families were struggling to put food on the table. The need has only increased since the pandemic, with 1 in 3 households with children experiencing food insecurity.¹
- School nutrition operations would become more financially viable. Schools would receive the free reimbursement rate for each breakfast and lunch served, which better reflects the additional costs of providing meals during COVID-19. They also would not have to process free and reduced-price school meals applications or struggle to collect unpaid school meals fees, which would reduce the administrative costs of operating the school nutrition programs.
- Afterschool and summer meal sites would be able to operate in any community throughout the country, making it easier for families in need to access nutritious meals for their children. With schools across the country implementing remote learning, decreasing the number of days or hours that students will attend school, or operating a hybrid schedule, this Act is critical to meeting students’ nutritional needs so that they can learn and thrive.
- Child care homes would be able to receive the highest reimbursement for meals and would have a significant reduction in administrative work.

¹ Northwestern Institute for Policy Research. (2020). *Estimates of Food Insecurity During the COVID-19 Crisis: Results from the COVID Impact Survey, Week 1 (April 20–26, 2020)*. Available at: https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/documents/reports/food-insecurity-covid_week1_report-13-may-2020.pdf. Accessed on August 12, 2020.